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1921

No. 55

A BAD MIX-UP

Dialog
for 5 males

By E. J. FREUND

No plays exchanged



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A BAD MIXUP

Characters:

Mr. Bum } two gents of like stature and
Mr. Gum } clothes, as near a double in person-
 ality as possible.

Mr. Wull } tramps of like stature and clothes
Mr. Dull } as near a double as possible.

Policeman, in uniform

Scene:

Street, front of dwelling in center, with door. Entrance to stage right and left.

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A Bad Mixup

Wull (enters right). Oh, the happy sensation inside of me (strikes stomach). My inner machinery seems to be rusted over on account of being put out of commission for quite a while. My stomach gnarls like a mad cur. I think it's almost a week ago since I had my last meal. I have no idea any more what taste is like. I think I would not know the difference between a beefsteak and a bootleg. If nothing turns up soon, I will be obliged to eat my old hat (takes off hat and scrutinizes same). I am afraid it won't render me a meal neither (has arrived at door left, exit).

Dull (enters). They tell me Vesuvius again has had an eruption. I feel as tho Vesuvius has erupted within my stomach (feels stomach). It feels all dried up. Before I will be able to eat a good meal, I'm afraid I will have to drink water in order to draw the cracks together, otherwise everything will leak out. Yea, my dear stomach. It is gone and only a cavity left where it used to hang. If my plight continues, my stomach will dry to my backbone. If that happens, I may sell my-

self as a board to some contractor (has arrived at left door. Policeman enters right. Dull makes a long nose and skips thru door left). Police (wiping perspiration off his face). A fellow ought to own forty eyes in order to watch wretches like that one, and a hare's legs in order to catch them.

Bum (enters thru center door). Say, cop, can you get me a man to do an errand for me?

Police. I just saw a mealy person hanging around here, who went out that way (points to left door). I believe he is coming back (Dull enters left). There he is. Set him to work; and make him work hard (exit left). Dull (calling after him). Thanks. The same to you.

Bum (to Dull). Have you got time?

Dull. Time enough for anything; that's all I have got.

Bum (presenting jug in hand). Look, see this jug?

Dull (takes jug and puts it to his mouth). It is an empty one.

Bum. And here is a quarter.

Dull (takes money, walks to exit). Thank you, sir.

Bum. Hold on, sir, not quite so hasty. You take the jug and the quarter and fetch me a

quart of milk from the creamery around the corner. Understand?

Dull. With all within me — yes, sir.

Bum. Then go. I'll meet you here in ten minutes (exit thru center door. Dull exit left.)

Police (passes from right to left, as tho making his beat).

Wull (enters right). I am making my rounds just as well as yon cop, with the only difference that his round is wider than mine (measures his stomach).

Gum (enters left, calls after Wull). Hey there, Beanstalks, or whatever your name may be — you are just the man I am looking for.

Wull (turns toward him). My name is Wull, Fred Wull; my father's name is Frank Wull; my granddaddy's name was Fred Wull; my great granddaddy's name was....

Gum. Ah, stop — I don't care for the history of your family. Will you do an errand for me?

Wull. With the greatest of speed, providing there is something in it for me.

Gum. Take this basket and this dollar, go to the meat market around the corner and fetch me a beef roast. I'll meet you here in ten minutes.

Wull (stares at money in his hand). All right,

sir, I'll be back here in ten minutes (Gum exit left). A dollar. One hundred cents to buy meat for. He must be a millionaire. I'll tell that butcher to put in an extra sausage for me, then I'll feel like a man once more (exit right).

Police (enters right). I am watching these two. They look alike and act alike, very likely birds of the same feather. I am going to keep tab on them for a while. These lazybones ought to be put to work, and hard work at that. They don't do anything worth while, pay no taxes, but loaf about the streets and beg for money and meals; and should they die, the city has to pay for their burial. I'm going to watch them.

Bum (enters center), Hello, cop. Did you see a loafer around here with a jug?

Police. Well, didn't you talk with one just two minutes ago?

Bum. That was about ten minutes ago. I handed him a jug and a quarter and ordered him to get milk from the creamery around the corner.

Police. No, you didn't; you handed him a basket and a dollar and told him to go and get some meat for you, just two minutes ago.

Bum. Say, cop, your imagination is working

overtime. I haven't been on the street for the last ten minutes.

Police. Don't know what I'm talking about? I positively saw you here two minutes ago.

Bum. Why, man, you are as crazy as a bedbug.

Police. Take care, old man, I won't permit you to fool me like this. Haven't I got eyes in my face? I caution you, don't fop the cop, or something may happen to you.

Bum (walking backward until he feels the door in his back, talking). That is the craziest chap I've met for a long while. He ought to be laid off for good. Officers of his sort are dangerous to meet on the street (exit in haste thru door).

Police (watching him disappear, musingly). His thinking box is out of order, the way it seems to me. I'll watch him as soon as he comes out of his den again. One must keep an eye on his sort (stands before center door, back towards audience, watching).

Gum (enters left, smoking pipe, good naturedly.) Good morning, cop. Have you noticed a young never-do-good about here who acted as tho his conscience was encumbered?

Police (grabbing for his club). There, he is coming the other way. Say, Mister, if you

put that same question again to me, I'll hit you over the head with this club. Understand?

Gum (frightened, drops pipe from mouth).

This beats me. What's the matter with that fellow? He feels offended at a civil question?

Police. Civil? You call that civil? Didn't I answer that very same question just a minute ago? Have you forgotten so suddenly? Your memory must be impaired.

Gum. A minute ago? What are you talking about. I haven't been on this street for the last ten minutes.

Police. There, he starts the same stuff over again. See here, sir:— You leave this street this moment and go right back into your den, do you hear?

Gum (staring at Policeman in bewildered manner). Say.... you're a peach ... You are ripe for the hospital, I s'pose.... Did somebody put straw in your head?

Police (agitatedly). See here, old man, I've cautioned you a minute ago that something would happen to you if you'd fop the cop. Now I'm going to run you in (grabs Gum's arm). Shake along, sir.

Gum (tearing away). You shake along yourself. I'll report this to the Board of health (exit right).

Dull (enters left, jug in hand, addresses policeman). Did you see a short fleshy man here with a red nose on his face?

Police. Should say so. Saw him here numerous times. The last time he left in that direction (points right).

Dull. Thanks. If you should happen to meet him again, tell him to look me up at No. 000 in the basement (exit right).

Police (walks to and fro, swinging club.)

Wull (enters right, with basket). Say, you wandering Jew there, did you see a nice looking, short and fleshy old gent here, while you were cruising about here?

Police (takes hold of Wull's collar). I am not fooled that easy, young man. A moment ago you were lugging a jug and now you carry a basket on your arm, imagining, of course, that I won't know you.

Wull. I should say not, you all-knowing servant of justice; there is no reason why I should steal this basket. A man handed it to me about ten minutes ago and told me to get meat for him; I am looking for this man just now.

Police. Didn't you enquire just a minute ago for this very same man?

Wull. To be sure, not; this is the very first time.

Police (grabbing a tighter hold of Wull's collar). You're fibbing; young man. Don't try that again with me.

Wull. You are mistaken, sir, I am not lying, but just now terribly embarrassed.

Police. Well, I'll give you just two minutes to vamp — go!

Wull (hasting towards left, meets Bum, entering).

Bum. Hello! Here's my man. Where is your milk?

Wull. I've got no milk, but I got the meat you ordered (offers basket).

Bum. Nonsense. I didn't give you a basket, I gave you a jug to get milk in for me. Where is my jug and my milk?

Wull. You are mistaken, sir. On this very same spot, just ten minutes ago you handed me this basket and one dollar to get you this meat for.

Bum. Yes. Very good . . . Just ten minutes ago, on this very same spot, I handed you a jug and twentyfive cents to get me some milk. Now you are trying to play the ignoramus on me. But I won't be fooled.

Wull (staring at Bum). He must have been swallowing a nest of yellowjackets I fear, and they are turning his head topsy-turvy.

Bum (grabs Wull's collar). Look-a here, young man, if you don't hand out either my money or my milk, I'll smash you one or two on your donkey spoons that will make all the bells in your steeple ring like ten thousand tinkles.

Wull (tears loose, walks up to policeman). Say, captain, pinch me in the arm so I'll know that I am myself; and then please kick that guy into the middle of next week, will you?

Police. Ah, gowan, it's none of my business.

Bum (pointing finger downwards). Here you come and give me my milk.

Wull (pointing finger to package). Here is your meat if you want it; your milk I haven't got,

Bum (pointing downwards). Here you come and give me my quarter.

Wull. I haven't got your quarter. Your dollar I've paid out for your meat.

Bum. Give me that money or I'll scrub the street with you (grabs him).

Wull. Let me go, I say, I'm afraid of lunatics.

Bum (shakes him). You call me crazy, hey?

Police (pulls Bum away, kicks Wull off). This is enough now. No more of this nuisance on this street. Get out of here, both of you.

Bum (enraged). Wait, I'll show that fellow

something (follows Wull; Wull drops down; Bum falls over him; Wull gets up and runs out right; Bum gets up; to policeman.) Why, didn't you hold him? (aside). The whole world seems to be crazy (to audience.) Wonder if I ain't a little bit crazy myself (exit left).

Police. You bet your sweet life, you are . . .

This is a fools' corner. I'll keep watching it.

Dull (enters right, persecuted by Gum).

Gum (chiding after Dull). Just wait, I'll show you something. I sent you for one dollar's worth of meat and you are coming back with a quarter's worth of milk. You are robbing me of 75 cents.

Dull (on the move). And I tell you, you are wrong, entirely wrong. You gave me this jug and a quarter, that's all. You're trying to chin me out of money, you shark (stands).

Gum. You are crazy, I tell you, that's what you are. I am no member of the Christian Science church who drinks milk for health; I am eating my daily meat; and I want it of you, rascal. Give it to me.

Dull. You didn't send me after meat; it was milk you ordered, no meat.

Gum. Meat it was, you squareheaded sheep. Your head is turned round about so you don't know what you are doing.

Dull. Now, that's enough of your crookedness. My head belongs to me and doesn't concern you at all.

Gum. Crookedness, you say? I'll show you pretty soon who is a crook on this street. Give me my dollar back, if you haven't got the meat.

Dull. You either take this milk, or I'll drink it.

Gum. Drink it for all I care. I want money . . . or . . . meat (grabs Dull by his scalp and shakes him).

Police (rushes up and collars Gum). See here, you fighting roosters, I have got just about enough of this tomfoolery on a public street. I'll shake all your molars out of your foul mouth (shakes him).

Gum (astonished). Why, what's the matter, cop?

Police. Just a moment ago yor were quarreling about a basket and now you repeat the racket by fighting over a jug. That's what's the matter.

Dull. Well, look-a here, cop, this man sent me around the corner for some milk, and now he wants meat instead of milk.

Gum (in ecstasy). Oh, the dyed-in-the-wool liar, deadbeat and falsehood teller! Some one has cut his conscience out of his anatomy, I'm sure.

Police. Don't waste your wind any longer, gentlemen, you are entirely out of order on this street. Skip to your dens.

Gum. Great Alexander, what is this town coming to? (exit right).

Dull. Say, cop, there is good milk in this jug, and the crazy fellow didn't want it. It would be a pity to let it sour (hands jug to policeman). Take a drink.

Police (takes a long drink from jug, wipes his mustache, smacks.)

Dull. Is it good?

Police. Hm—hm (drinks again). There, that's what the monkey did when the crows quarreled over cheese (hands jug back). The fellow who wouldn't take that is a fool (exit right).

Dull (looking into jug, turning it over, shaking head). It is empty. That cop took gulps like a cow.

Bum (enters left). There's the rogue. Now give me my milk (takes jug away from Dull and peeps into it). What's this? There is nothing in it. The milk is gone (looks sharp at Dull). Where is the meat you were trying to persuade onto me?

Dull. You didn't send me after meat.

Bum. That is so, but a minute or two ago you were arguing your head off in order to prove that I had sent you after meat. Where did you leave your basket?

Dull. I never had a basket, nor meat.

Bum. Yes, I know you are lying like a candidate before election. What did you do with my meat?

Dull. I have been telling you right along that

I never had your meat, neither have you seen me with a basket. And as to your milk, you told me you did not want it, so the policeman drank it all.

Bum. What's that? He drank it, you say? All right, in that case I'll have to maul it out of you again (drives Dull around the stage without getting a hold of him.)

Policeman (enters right, collars both). This is the last of your rooster fight, I tell you. I won't have any more of it on this street, so you come along to the pen. That is a fitting place for the like of you (drags off with them).

Dull. Is this how you are paying for the milk you drank?

Police. Shut your mouth. This way, boys, this way (exit right with them).

Wull (enters left, with basket; picking his teeth with a tooth pick). That was a regular treat. Since that distorted fleshy old gent did not want his meat, I exchanged it at the hotel for fourteen ham sandwiches and ate every crumb of them. Now I feel better (pets stomach).

Gum (enters right). At last! Now let me have my basket with my meat.

Wull. The meat is gone. Five minutes ago I tried my very best to make you take the meat, but you wouldn't have it; you wanted milk instead of meat.

Gum. Lying again as fast as ever. You wanted to give me a jug of milk; meat you didn't

have. Where is my meat?

Wull. Didn't I tell you? When you refused to take it, I went to the hotel and exchanged it for fourteen ham sandwiches, which I ate. Did you expect me to carry my basket all day along with me?

Gum. This beats all. Didn't I ask you for my meat all the time and didn't you want to unload a jug of milk on me in its place? You are rattled and don't know what you are talking about. Where did you leave my dollar?

Wull. For your dollar I bought your meat, and for your meat I got fourteen sandwiches, which I ate. Now don't ask that question again, for this is the last time I am going to answer it.

Gum (irefully). And this is the last time I'll ask you for it. Come here (grabs Wull and hits him in the neck. Wull screams).

Police (rushes in right). Here, stop that, I say. Stop clubbing the fellow. Do you hear me (collars both, looks sharp at each of them). Of all the world — how do you get here again? Just a few minutes ago I locked both of you up in the calaboose.

Gum. Dear me, here is the other crazy jack again.

Wull. I have never seen the inside of a jail, sir.

Police (enraged). Stop your lying. Just five minutes ago I delivered both of you over to

the jailer. How you managed to be out here again, passes my understanding.

Gum. Yes, yes, you're right, perfectly right—
I am crazy, he is crazy, you are crazy, we
are crazy . . .

Police. All right, sir. Good you admit it yourself. I see the jail was the wrong place for you, so I'll deliver you up at the insane asylum. Push ahead, fools (pushes them to door right, when this flies open and Bum and Dull enter. Being greatly amazed at this, policeman loosens grip on Gum and Wull. — All scrutinize each other with great consternation).

Tableau: left from audience, Gum, opposite right, Bum; left from audience, Wull, opposite right, Dull. Policeman backs, step for step, slowly towards left door, speaking as follows): For the love of Joe . . . This beats me . . . I have quite often seen things double where there was only one . . . But I'll eat my hat if I ever saw four men confronting each other where there were only two ten seconds ago . . . two of them going and coming at the same time . . . This street must be haunted . . . I'll give up. This is too much for me . . . too much . . . too awkward (grabs club and stands on the defensive) . . .

Bum (to Gum). So you are the man who got my milk.

Gum (to Bum). And you are the man who got my meat (both turn up their sleeves as if get-

ting ready for a fight.)

Dull (to Wull). And I believe you are the rascal who played my double.

Wull (to Dull). And you are the rogue who fooled me (both start turning sleeves as if getting ready for a fight.)

Police. There! They are at it again, this time all four of them. But I'll disentangle this bad mixup with my club (clubs hard, i. e. makes it appear so.) Clear the street, I sayclear the sidewalk.... step lively ... and watch your step (drives all four out and walks after them, clubbing).

Curtain.



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